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UNCLAS DOHA 000650

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR USTR - JONATHAN KALLMER AND JASON BUNTIN
EEB/IFD/OIA - DAN JACOBS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [EINV](#) [ECIN](#) [ETRD](#) [INRB](#) [QA](#)
SUBJECT: NEW TRADE MINISTER WELCOMES BILATERAL INVESTMENT
TALKS

REF: DOHA 475

(SBU) KEY POINTS

-- The new Minister of Business and Trade wants to improve trade and investment ties with the United States and would welcome a visit soon by Department of State and USTR representatives to begin discussing a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT).

-- The Minister would receive a delegation if he is in Country; the substantive point person for discussions will be Director of Economic Affairs Saoud Jassim Al-Jufairi.

-- Post understands Department and USTR will want assurances that Qatar is willing to agree to certain core provisions before an official trip.

-- Post recommends that we help arrange a phone call or videoconference between Al-Jufairi and appropriate DoS/USTR staff to seek these assurances.

(SBU) COMMENTS

-- Our Ministry contacts had previously indicated that the Cabinet approved BIT negotiations with the U.S.

-- Progress on U.S.-Qatar trade and investment liberalization had languished under the old Ministry of Economy and Commerce during Finance Minister Kamal's acting tenure.

-- The new ministry, focused as it is on trade and business, should revitalize bilateral trade and investment issues. The Embassy will proceed actively to make that happen.

END KEY POINTS AND COMMENTS.

¶1. (SBU) During an introductory office call with Ambassador September 10, the new Minister of Business and Trade Sheikh Fahad Bin Jassim Al Thani (see reftel on the July 1 Ministry/Minister changes) said he is excited about the opportunity to lead the new Ministry and take a fresh look at Qatar's bilateral trade and investment relationships. Sheikh Fahad is focused on encouraging private-sector development in Qatar, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

¶2. (SBU) The Minister and his staff are currently researching how best to align the Ministry with the Amir's vision, and he outlined four pillars for their work:

A) Creating an ideal business environment in Qatar, particularly for SMEs and start-ups.

B) Promoting foreign investment in Qatar and Qatari investment abroad.

C) Expanding public-private partnerships. In particular, he wants the private sector to become more effective and play a greater role in the country's development.

D) Increasing foreign trade beyond the oil and gas sector.

¶3. (U) BIO NOTE: Sheikh Fahad is the former COO of government telecommunications operator QTel. He speaks excellent English and received a bachelor's degree in Engineering from the University of Kent (UK). He has a brother named Hamad Bin Jassim Al Thani who is not/not the Prime Minister/Foreign Minister of the same name.

LeBaron